

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13
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----- 024305 /17

R 160553Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2041
INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINS, ET
SUBJ: ITALIAN CITIZEN KILLED; SPINOFF ON AMERICANS

1. LATE AFTERNOON DEC 10, EPMG SECURITY FORCES SURROUNDED HOME OF ELDERLY ITALIAN CONTRACTOR IN ADDIS, AND IN WHAT MEDIA LATER DESCRIBED AS SHOOTOUT, ITALIAN LOST HIS LIFE. INCIDENT STARTED OVER LABOR DISPUTE. ITALIAN APPARENTLY REFUSED SOMMONS DELIVERED BY LOCAL POLICE AT HIS HOME, THEN FOR REASONS WHICH WILL PROBABLY NEVER BE KNOWN, SHOT AND KILLED AT LEAST ONE POLICEMAN AND WOUNDED ANOTHER. KILLING IMMEDIATELY ATTRACTED OVERWHELMING SECURITY FORCE INCLUDING GUN JEEPS AND ARMORED CARS. APPARENTLY ITALIAN CHOSE TO RESIST (PRESS ACCOUNT LISTED ONE SOLDIER WOUNDED) AND DIED IN ENSUING ASSAULT ON HIS HOUSE.

2. GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES, INCIDENT IN AND OF ITSELF, APART FROM PROVIDING LIVELY TOPIC OF CONVERSATION, HAS NOT LED TO ANY PARTICULAR HEIGHTENED SENSE OF APPREHENSION AMONG FOREIGN COMMUNITY IN ADDIS. SHOOTOUT WAS HOWEVER OF DIRECT AND IMMEDIATE CONCERN TO US. HOME OF NAMRU DIRECTOR WAS IMMEDIATELY ADJACENT TO ITALIAN AND HOME OF AID DIRECTOR DIAGONALLY ACROSS STREET. BOTH WERE OCCUPIED AT TIME OF ASSAULT AND BOTH TOOK FIRE FROM SECURITY FORCES. NAMRU DIRECTOR AND HIS FAMILY WERE FORCED TO TAKE COVER WHEN SHOTS ENTERED KITCHEN, A BATHROOM AND A ROOM IN BETWEEN. FIVE BULLET HOLES WERE LATER DISCOVERED IN AID DIRECTOR'S

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HOUSEWHICH WAS OCCUPIED BY HIS WIFE AND TWO CHILDREN

ALTHOUGH THEIR IMPACT WAS NOT NOTICED AT TIME.

3. APPRISED OF SHOTS ENTERING NAMRU HOUSE DURING ASSAULT, EMBASSY CONTACTED BOTH MOND AND MOFA OFFICIALS WITH URGENT REQUEST THAT SECURITY FORCES STOP FIRING AT AMERICAN-OCCUPIED HOUSE, BUT INCIDENT WAS OVER BEFORE ANY ETHIOPIANS COULD TAKE ANY EFFECTIVE ACTION. ON DEC 14, EMBASSY SENT NOTE TO MOFA CALLING ATTENTION TO INCIDENT, STATING THAT WHILE MAINTENANCE OF LAW AND ORDER WAS STRICTLY WITHIN PROVINCE OF EPMG, SO TOO DID EPMG HAVE OBLIGATION TO PROTECT INNOCENT LIVES AND PROPERTY, AND STRONGLY PROTESTING FACT THAT IN PROCESS OF ASSAULTING ITALIAN HOME, SHOTS HAD ALSO BEEN FIRED INTO AMERICAN-OCCUPIED HOMES ENDANGERING BOTH LIFE AND PROPERTY. NOTE REQUESTED EPMG TAKE APPROPRIATE MEASURES TO PREVENT REOCCURRENCE OF SUCH INCIDENTS AND INFORMED EPMG THAT WHEN OUR ESTIMATES ARE COMPLETED, WE INTEND PRESENT THEM WITH A BILL. MOFA OFFICIAL WHO RECEIVED NOTE IMMEDIATELY EXPRESSED HIS REGRET AND PROMISED TO BRING MATTER TO ATTENTION OF APPROPRIATE AUTHORITIES.

4. COMMENT: THIS WAS ISOLATED INCIDENT WHICH, IF ANYTHING, PROVED ONCE AGAIN ETHIOPIAN PENCHANT FOR SETTLING IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS WITH GUNS, AND PROBLEMS OF BEING IN WRONG PLACE AT WRONG TIME. BOTH AMERICAN FAMILIES, HOWEVER, REACTED COOLLY AND USED THEIR HEADS, AND WHILE SHAKEN AT THE TIME, HAVE TAKEN INCIDENT FULLY IN STRIDE. NO ONE KNOWS WHAT CAUSED ITALIAN TO DO WHAT HE DID. GENERAL ASSUMPTION IS THAT MOUNTING FRUSTRATION SIMPLY OVERCAME HIS SENSE OF BALANCE. SOMALI EMBASSY, INCIDENTALLY, LOCATED NEXT TO AID DIRECTOR'S HOME, HAD EPMG SECURITY FORCES SWARMING ALL AROUND ITS COMPOUND WHILE TAKING PART IN ASSAULT (AMERICAN HOMES APPARENTLY DID NOT). WE UNDERSTAND SOMALI AMBASSADOR HAS ALSO PROTESTED.

5. WE ARE POUCHING TEXT OF NOTE.
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